**Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination against Older Australians and Australians with Disability**

# Submission No 47

**Name** Janeien Woollam

**Submission made by**

[x]  Older Australian in work

☒ Australian with disability in work

# Submission regarding Older Australians/ Australians with Disability / Both

### **Your experience**

**Have you (or the person you are submitting on behalf of) experienced employment discrimination?**

[x]  Yes

[ ]  No

[ ]  Not sure

**Did you take any action in relation to the employment discrimination you experienced?**

[ ]  Yes

[x]  No

**Please tell us more, for example, what action you took and how effective you felt it was; or why you chose not to take any action.**

I have had a number of temp positions since returning to Australia in 2010. The first full time position I was offered was because I had experience in a certain software package and they needed holiday cover. I was offered a permanent position when the person returned from Holiday. Then after a year the company was sold and half the people were made redundant. Even though there were people who started after me I was chosen. As there was no explanation I can only assume it was to do with my age and disability. I had praise for my work and I try not to jump to conclusions. I believe my Boss who hired me was ok however other senior managers were not happy with an older person who could not jump around with the younger employees.

It was Start-up Company and a very young group who had a lot of staff meetings that entailed a ball game or running game before starting which I thoroughly enjoyed watching and participating in a role I could manage.

Even when going to agencies for employment you can tell by their body language and the fact you are in and out in a few minutes that they don’t think you have a chance.

The only action I took was to keep trying different agencies to gain employment and to keep applying for positions. I decided there was no way I would change a person’s attitude on my own without any legal or political back up. One thing I did do was take out the dates of my work and education and anything that may have alerted the employer to my age. I did then start to get some calls and interviews. This made me feel better in as much as my experience was good enough to get an interview even though once at the interview it did not pan out to an offer of employment.

**Did your experience of employment discrimination impact on your participation in the workforce? (For example, did you have to stop work, change jobs or take sick leave?)**

[x] Yes

[ ] No

**Please tell us more.** I was a good worker and people said they would love to keep me on however they had no budget for the position. I could not find a permanent position. Because I have arthritis and due to an operation to remove a tumour from my spine I have limited ability to walk long distances so this means I cannot take public transport so any jobs in the CBD are out of the question. I need a job where I can park close that does not have a lot of stairs. This limits my options.

### **Barriers**

**Do you think older Australians/Australians with disability face barriers when they look for work or are in a job?**

[x] Yes

[ ] No

[ ] Not sure

**If yes, or not sure, what do you think these barriers might be?**

1. Employers attitudes
2. Facilities not conducive to the disabled, stairs etc doorways too narrow.
3. Extra cost of disabled access and anything that may be needed.
4. No legal or political incentives

**Does employment discrimination have an impact on gaining and keeping employment for older Australians/Australians with disability?**

[x] Yes

[ ] No

[ ] Not sure

**Are there any practices, attitudes or laws which discourage or prevent equal participation in employment of older Australians/Australians with disability?**

[x] Yes

[ ] No

[ ] Not sure

**Please tell us more:**

The laws that discourage or prevent equal participation in employment of older Australians/Australians with disability are the ones that are not there.

**What are the incentives and disincentives for older Australians/Australians with disability to work?**

**Incentives**: I don’t know of any The $10,000 dollars is only if someone had been unemployed for a while not for someone who has just lost their job.

**Disincentives:** Peoples impression of the older generation being slow and not up to date.

### **Good practice**

**Are there examples of good practice and workplace policies in employing and retaining older Australians/ Australians with disability?**

[ ] Yes

[ ] No

[x] Not sure

**Please tell us of examples of good practice in employing and retaining older Australians/ Australians with disability in work that you are aware of.**

When I applied for a position in England, before anyone was selected for interview everyone (yes everyone) who applied was invited to participate in a psychometric testing day. (PF16) Because of this I got the job out of 40 people that applied. It showed my abilities and personality before they had a chance to bias that with meeting me or seeing my CV.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if the Govt would subsidise this practice so older and disabled people could have one of these reports done to send that report along with their CV. It just may swing things in their favour.

### **Solutions**

**What action should be taken to address employment discrimination against older Australians/Australians with disability?**

I believe the only action that will improve the situation is positive discrimination. The workforce needs to reflect the population.

If we have 20% of people looking for work in the above 50 age group employers need to have 20% of their workforce in this age group. Of course certain groups this may not be feasible ie physical workers. However any office based employer could achieve this. In no way should anyone get a free ride, older people still need to be monitored and KPIs reached.

A $10,000 pa incentive is not really an incentive for employers, there needs to be a stick with the carrot to balance things out and that incentive is an insult to older and disabled Australians $10,000 is not going to sway an employer. Save it and give it to the pensioners.

**What should be done to enhance workforce participation of older Australians/Australians with disability?**

Have a government workforce advisor for the aged and disabled that employers can engage in order to understand more about what they can do. This advisor would be able to look at the company and its unique requirements with a holistic approach, do an audit and advise.

Have a drop in centre for older Australians where they can go to have a chat and coffee and be helped.

There is a group on Facebook called mature aged Job seekers where people are positively encouraged to keep trying.

Perhaps some course at TAFE or the local college specifically aimed at getting back to work for people that don’t have computer skills, ones that are not expensive. Other course to help older people feel worthwhile ie mediation, self-help, hypnosis, etc

**What outcomes or recommendations would you like to see from this National Inquiry?**

I would like to see some positive concrete actions….not recommendations that will go by the wayside.

I would like to see a summary of the points raised by the employers to see what their thoughts are.